



Oct. 1, 2020

## **CHELSEA FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH DONATES \$75,000 TO TWO LOCAL PROGRAMS**

CHELSEA, MI – Addressing two challenging issues in its community – emergency housing and youth mental health – this week, Chelsea First United Methodist Church gave \$50,600 to Faith in Action of Chelsea and Dexter, Inc., and \$25,300 to St. Joseph Mercy Chelsea for the SRSLY program.

These gifts, which address two of the church’s high priority mission areas of basic needs and youth mental health, are to be spent by the agencies no later than December 2023.

“We are enormously blessed to be able to give to these two local programs who are helping to address critical needs in our community,” said Rev. Joy Barrett, senior pastor at Chelsea First. “This money was raised during our sanctuary renovation capital campaign of 2014-15. As individuals made campaign pledges, they intended that a share of their donations be set aside for future use with local mission projects. These are the fruits of those gifts.”

### **EMERGENCY/TEMPORARY HOUSING**

Faith in Action plans to use the monies to investigate and implement ways to provide emergency and temporary housing.

Currently FIA’s primary option to meet short-term or emergency housing for individuals and families is to provide one or two nights in a local hotel, said Sheri Montoye, FIA Executive Director. FIA can refer people to shelters in Ann Arbor or Jackson, however space is not always available, and is sometimes a poor match for some individuals and multi-member families or those who have had bad experiences with shelters in the past. Often the need is for a few weeks of housing, allowing enough time for the person or family to work out a longer-term solution. Local homeless households are forced to live in their car, or if they have one, sleep in a tent.



The first charge of the project is to investigate and address the legal and regulatory issues involved in being a housing provider, or to identify other strategies to meet the short-term emergency housing needs in the community.

“There seem to be many challenging and heartbreaking emergency temporary housing needs presented to our social work staff each year,” Montoye said. “Households who lack resources also face unemployment, terminal illness, end up unexpectedly between housing, and can fall through the cracks of housing assistance. These funds allow Faith in Action to be prepared as we continue to address housing insecurity in our service area.”

Barrett shared how congregation members were excited about FIA’s proposal. “This is visionary and experimental; the funds allow exploration of a needed service that FIA has been wanting to address, but lacked implementation resources to make the planning effort worthwhile.”

## YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

The hospital plans to use the donation to support the SRSLY program, known for its strong track record on substance abuse prevention. The funds will help SRSLY expand into broader issues of youth mental health, including effective prevention and response, said Reiley Curran, SJMC Community Health Improvement Manager. Plans have been jointly developed with the Youth Mental Health Community Collaborative, a group that includes the Chelsea School District and other concerned community members and organizations. Youth in Chelsea face a number of challenges with regards to mental health. Multiple data sources confirm the need for action to prevent the negative impacts and outcomes of mental illness.

"St. Joe's Chelsea and SRSLY are honored and grateful for this generous gift," Curran said. "We look forward to working with our community partners to support youth mental health in Chelsea through the promotion of resiliency, healthy coping skills and training resources."

Barrett said Chelsea First members want to be part of the solution. “We are deeply concerned about the mental health challenges our young people face,” she said. “This program works closely with the Chelsea schools and others across our community to help our young people know they aren’t alone.”

## INVOLVEMENT

Barrett said these weren't the first gifts of money, time and products church members have provided to the organizations. "Annually, Chelsea First members, including children, youth and adults, have served as volunteers with both organizations," she said. "For instance, each month, we collect food items for FIA.

"We are delighted that these monies will help each organization leverage additional local, state and federal monies to address priority needs in Chelsea."

Barrett recognized the timing of these gifts during uncertain times may be somewhat providential. "As one of our congregation members recently said, God's time is not always our time. Who could have known that we would be contributing to homelessness and to youth mental health during a global pandemic?"

## MORE INFORMATION

Originally organized in 1853, the Chelsea First United Methodist Church is part of the 13 million members and 43,000 churches of the United Methodist Church.

<http://www.chelseaumc.org/>

Founded in 1980, Faith In Action provides essential support to alleviate the effects of hunger and poverty for those in the Dexter, Chelsea, and surrounding communities.

<https://www.faithinaction1.org/>

Established in 1970, St. Joseph Mercy Chelsea is a 133-bed, not-for-profit hospital -- a joint venture between Saint Joseph Mercy Health System and University of Michigan Health. <https://www.stjoeshealth.org/>